

P R 111322Z NOV 96
FM AMCONSUL PESHAWAR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0697
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY RIYADH
AMCONSUL JEDDAH
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMCONSUL DUBAI
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE
AMEMBASSY ALMATY
AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMCONSUL LAHORE
AMCONSUL KARACHI
USIA WASHDC 0304

DIA WASHINGTON DC 0255

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PESHAWAR 01059

DEPT ALSO FOR EUR/CEN
USIA FOR NEA - LARSEN
LONDON FOR TUELLER
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/11/06

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SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN: TALIBAN STALL IN PERMITTING WESTERN
JOURNALISTS ACCESS TO USAMA BIN LADEN

REF: FGBIS AMMAN JN 1307072496

[1](#)1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY BRAD HANSON, PRINCIPAL OFFICER, AMCONSULATE
PESHAWAR. REASON: 1.5 D.

[1](#)2. (C) SUMMARY: NANGARHAR TALIBAN PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS HAVE TOLD
A RESPECTED PAKISTANI REPORTER THAT USAMA BIN LADEN IS IN
JALALABAD. THEY HESITATED TO GRANT THE BBC STRINGER'S REQUEST TO
INTERVIEW HIM -- REFERRING IT TO KANDAHAR -- PERHAPS BECAUSE
THEY DO NOT WANT TO PUBLICIZE THAT THE TALIBAN HAVE ALLOWED BIN
LADEN TO REMAIN IN TALIBAN TERRITORY. LOCAL TALIBAN OFFICIALS
JUSTIFY GIVING REFUGE TO BIN LADEN BY STATING HE WAS THERE
ALREADY, HE HELPED THE AFGHANS IN THEIR JIHAD AGAINST THE
SOVIETS, AND THEY ARE NOT CONVINCED HE HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN
TERRORIST ACTIVITIES. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)3. (C) RAHIMULLAH YUSUFZAI (STRICTLY PROTECT), RESPECTED REPORTER
FOR PAKISTANI DAILY, "THE NEWS," AND BBC STRINGER, VOLUNTEERED TO
PO AT A RECEPTION NOV 8 THAT HE HAD BEEN TRYING TO INTERVIEW
TERRORIST FINANCIER USAMA BIN LADEN IN NANGARHAR PROVINCE. HE
STATED THAT HE HAD MET WITH THE TALIBAN GOVERNOR, DEPUTY
GOVERNOR, AND HEAD OF SECURITY IN JALALABAD ABOUT TEN DAYS
PREVIOUSLY. ALL HAD REPORTEDLY SAID THAT BIN LADEN WAS IN
JALALABAD. YUSUFZAI WAS TOLD TO WAIT A DAY TO SET UP THE
INTERVIEW AND INDEED, HE HAD STAYED AN EXTRA NIGHT IN JALALABAD
IN ANTICIPATION. HOWEVER, "THE TALIBAN APPARENTLY GOT COLD
FEET," YUSUFZAI CONJECTURED, AND HE WAS TOLD THEY HAD TO GET A
DECISION FROM TALIBAN OFFICIALS IN KANDAHAR. AS OF NOV 8,
YUSUFZAI HAD NOT HEARD BACK FROM ANY TALIBAN OFFICIAL ON HIS
REQUEST.

[1](#)4. (C) YUSUFZAI EXPLAINED THAT BIN LADEN HAD PASSED A MESSAGE TO
THE BBC BEFORE THE TALIBAN HAD TAKEN JALALABAD IN SEPT THAT HE
WANTED TO BE INTERVIEWED BY BBC TV AND BBC'S ARABIC LANGUAGE
SERVICE. YUSUFZAI WAS IN THE PROCESS OF ARRANGING FOR A BBC
ARABIC SERVICE TEAM'S VISIT TO AFGHANISTAN TO DO THE INTERVIEW
WHEN THE TALIBAN CAPTURED JALALABAD SEPT 11/12. NOW BBC
(YUSUFZAI) AND TIME'S NEW DELHI BUREAU CHIEF WERE TRYING TO
ARRANGE AN INTERVIEW. YUSUFZAI ALSO EXPLAINED THAT BIN LADEN HAD
MADE TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE UK DAILY "INDEPENDENT'S"
REPORTER, FISKE, WHOM HE RESPECTED FOR HIS "BALANCED REPORTING"

ON ARAB/ISRAELI ISSUES, TO TRAVEL FROM DUBAI TO AFGHANISTAN TO INTERVIEW BIN LADEN THE PAST SUMMER. FISKE HAD NEVER BEEN TO AFGHANISTAN BEFORE, YUSUFZAI SAID. (NOTE: ACCORDING TO REFTTEL, "THE INDEPENDENT" INTERVIEWED BIN LADEN IN EARLY JULY 1996.)

15. (C) YUSUFZAI SPECULATED THAT THE NANGARHAR TALIBAN OFFICIALS, ON SECOND THOUGHT, HESITATED IN GRANTING HIM ACCESS TO BIN LADEN, BECAUSE THEY REALIZED THAT THE USG AND OTHER GOVERNMENTS WERE AGAINST BIN LADEN AND THE TALIBAN DID NOT WANT TO PUBLICIZE THAT HE WAS IN THEIR TERRITORY, AND THAT THE TALIBAN WERE ALLOWING HIM TO STAY. WHEN YUSUFZAI ASKED NANGARHAR PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS WHY THEY HAD GIVEN REFUGE TO BIN LADEN, THEY REPORTEDLY GAVE THREE REASONS. FIRST, HE WAS ALREADY IN THEIR TERRITORY WHEN THEY TOOK JALALABAD. SECOND, BIN LADEN HAD ASSISTED THE AFGHANS A LOT IN THEIR JIHAD AGAINST THE SOVIETS. THIRD, THE TALIBAN WERE NOT SURE HE WAS INVOLVED IN TERRORIST ACTIVITIES, AND HAD NOT YET SEEN CONVINCING PROOF OF HIS INVOLVEMENT.

16. (C) COMMENT: YUSUFZAI IS A WELL-RESPECTED PAKISTANI REPORTER, ONE OF THE FEW WHO COVERS AFGHANISTAN FROM TRAVELING THERE, AND SO HIS REPORT IS CREDIBLE. THIS IS FURTHER CONFIRMATION OF BIN LADEN'S PRESENCE IN NANGARHAR. IF THE TALIBAN LOCAL OFFICIALS' THIRD REASON FOR GIVING BIN LADEN REFUGE IS TRULY A REASON AND NOT A PRETEXT, THEN THERE MAY BE AN OPENING TO CONVINCE THE TALIBAN OF HIS TERRORIST FINANCIER ACTIVITIES.

HANSON